

About Baraboo

There are many cities throughout this nation that take pride in who they are & what they represent. We are one of them.

Population: 12,700 is the preliminary estimate as of January 1, 2023.

Location: Approximately 40 miles northwest of Madison, or 12 miles west of I90-94. Baraboo is accessible from Hwy 12, Hwy 33, or Hwy 159. City Hall is located at 101 South Blvd., Baraboo. 608-355-2700.

Area: The City occupies approximately 3,356.5 acres of beautiful real estate along the Baraboo River & between the north & south range of the Baraboo Range National Landmark. The Baraboo-Dells Airport on Highway BD is located just north of the City. The City is a mixture of older, charming homes, a unique Courthouse Square that combines the old with the new, and a variety of residential developments that blend in well with the architecture & flavor of the area.

Business: Baraboo is a hub of tourism, commerce, & industry, we have:

- Large retail stores as well as a wonderful mix of entrepreneurial businesses that include salons, spas, art galleries, gift shops, clothiers, specialty shops, antiques, & more in our downtown area.
- Large & small diversified clean industrial operations.
- Doctors, lawyers, dentists, accountants, bankers, teachers, barbers, & book dealers.

Education: Our School District consistently ranks above the State average in test scores.

- We have five elementary schools & a middle/high school campus, along with two parochial private schools.
- The UW-Platteville-Baraboo-Sauk County campus provides many options in helping to reach your goals.

Entertainment:

- Home of the historic Al. Ringling Theatre;
- Adjacent to Devil's Lake State Park, & near Mirror Lake State Park, both great places for hiking, boating, & camping;
- Close to the Wisconsin Dells area;
- Home of the International Crane Foundation & the Circus World Museum;
- Outdoor & indoor public pools, skateboard park, beautiful baseball diamonds, & a hockey/skate pavilion;
- Numerous parks & the Ochsner Park Zoo;
- Canoe/Kayak the Baraboo River (free of all dams);
- Ho Chunk Casino;
- Devil's Head & Cascade Mountain winter downhill/cross country skiing & snowboarding;
- A golf course with a great view;
- Baraboo Bluffs Historic Landmark;
- Sauk County Historical Society;
- And much more.

Visit [Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce site](#) for more events in the area.

Media: The Baraboo News Republic (a daily publication), WRPQ, & WBDL.

Churches: We are home to over 25 different churches & about 20 denominations.

Medical & Dental Services: We have several clinics for orthopedic, pediatric, internal, & general medicine; a hospital; dental, podiatry, & eye care facilities. Acupuncture, massage, & holistic establishments are readily available. We are also a Regional Medical Center.

City Departments: To understand how our City works, it's helpful to become acquainted with the City Departments that handle day-to-day operations. We encourage you to visit [the individual department pages](#).

City Officials: [Directory](#) of the various offices and departments that comprise City government in Baraboo, their officials, physical locations, & phone numbers.

Common Council: [Directory](#) of the Mayor, Council Members, and their contact information and term information. Council meetings are held the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 7pm. and are streamed live. [Follow this link to view our latest Council meeting](#).

History of Baraboo

The first settlers came to this area in 1838. Being near the river was an advantage for the development of this area. By 1846 Baraboo became the County Seat; by 1866 it became an official Village; & by 1882 it became a City. In 2004, Baraboo became a 3rd class city having hit the 11,000 mark in population.

Baraboo is most often known as "Circus City" for several reasons, not just for the fact that the Ringling Brothers called Baraboo home and had their winter quarters here through 1918. In 1884 the young Ringling Brothers gave their first official circus performance. They rapidly grew successful and eventually joined forces with the Barnum & Bailey show which gave rise to the name we are all so familiar with: The Ringling Brothers & Barnum & Bailey Circus. Not only did the Ringling's call Baraboo home; other circuses started in Baraboo as well: Gollmar Brothers (1891 to 1916), John Robinson (1898), Forepaugh Sells Brothers (1910-1911), Fun on the Farm (1924), & Wilbur W. Deppe's Classic Country Circus (1961-1966).

Why are we known as "Gem City"? When the old court house was first built it stood for years in the center of a lot otherwise vacant, unadorned by lawn, tree, shrub or flower. The County Board refused time and again to appropriate funds for the embellishment of or for the care of the grounds. The determined horticulturists in Baraboo took things into their own hands. They appointed a day for a "bee" and called for volunteers to fix up the court house yard. The volunteers came with tools, trees and flowers, and as a result, the name "**Gem City**" began from this day.